



Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Kīlauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Planning

Halema'uma'u and 'ama'u fern

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

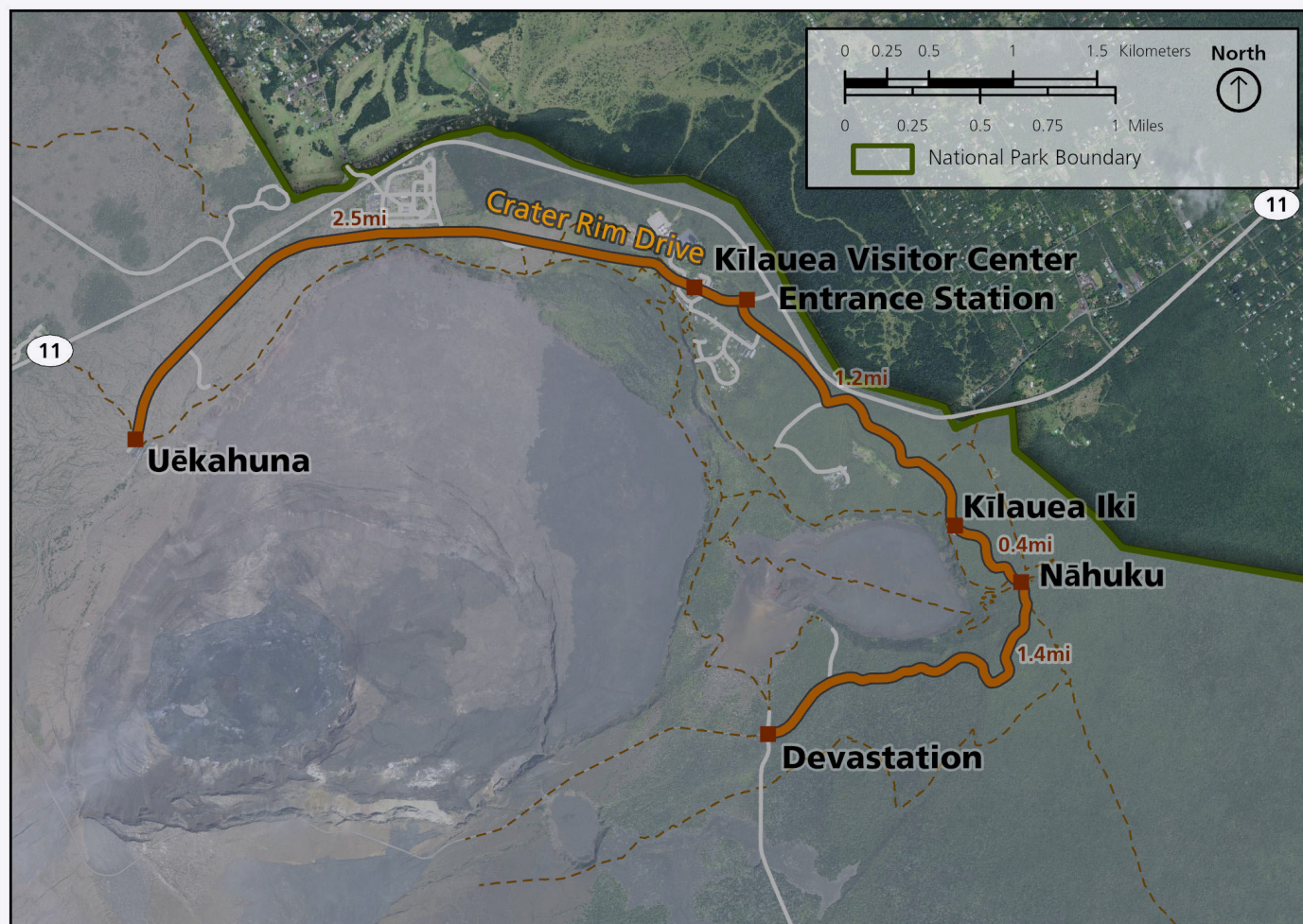
The National Park Service (NPS) is beginning planning for the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Kīlauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan. The plan and future compliance will include concepts for natural and cultural resource protection and address vehicle congestion, parking, multimodal circulation, and other management needs. The National Park Service will work with its partners, stakeholders, and the public to develop the plan in compliance with legal and policy requirements. There will be several opportunities to provide comments. Thank you for being involved in this process!

OVERVIEW

Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is on the southeastern end of the island of Hawai'i, the southernmost island of the Hawaiian Islands archipelago. The park is home to geologic, biologic, and cultural landscapes that are unique in the world, including two of the world's most active shield volcanoes, one of which is Kīlauea. Crater Rim Drive provides access to many of the park's volcanic, scenic, natural, and cultural features including Uēkahuna (at the summit of Kīlauea volcano), Nāhuku (Thurston Lava Tube), Kīlauea Iki, Devastation (a large expanse of recovery through deep cinder deposited in 1959), and Kīlauea Visitor Center. As part of the park's purpose to perpetuate endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and traditional Hawaiian culture, it is important to find a balance between appropriate visitor use and protecting the park's sensitive resources. The entire park is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property, and Native Hawaiians hold sacred the lands and resources within the park boundary, including the Kīlauea summit.

PURPOSE OF THE PARK

The purpose of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is to protect, study, and provide access to Kīlauea and Mauna Loa, two of the world's most active volcanoes, and perpetuate endemic Hawaiian ecosystems and the traditional Hawaiian culture connected to these landscapes.

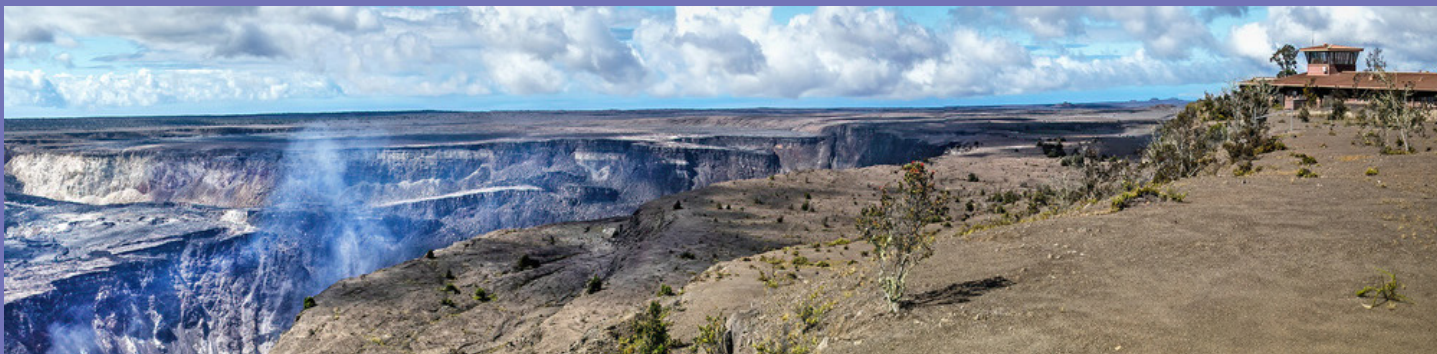


Overview map of the Kīlauea summit area and corridor

In February 2022, the park completed a preliminary planning project to examine needs identified in the *Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park Foundation Document* (2017) for improving and/or reconfiguring parking areas along Crater Rim Drive, creating better trail connections between these parking areas, conducting a holistic analysis of individual building functions within the Kīlauea Visitor Center area, and recommending design improvements to sites with high visitor use to address accessibility and deferred maintenance and to enhance the visitor experience. The preliminary project planning process further defined key issues and constraints associated with the planning needs.

The Kīlauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan will build on previous planning efforts to repair and replace critical park and US Geological Survey (USGS) infrastructure and park visitor facilities damaged in the 2018 eruption. The National Park Service prepared an environmental assessment to examine alternative actions and associated environmental impacts to replace the NPS and USGS long-term operational and visitor use functions that would be lost with the demolition of the facilities on the Uēkahuna bluff. The *Hawai'i Volcanoes Disaster Recovery Project Finding of No Significant Impact* was signed by Superintendent Rhonda Loh in November 2022 and can be found here: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/documentsList.cfm?projectId=92891>.

The purpose of this project is to develop a Kīlauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park to guide NPS management of visitor use and multimodal transportation (e.g., pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle). The plan will identify strategies to reduce vehicle congestion and improve parking and multimodal circulation; identify potential improvements to transportation infrastructure; and identify visitor capacities and potential visitor use management options. The plan will address the highest use areas including the entrance station, Uēkahuna, Nāhuku, Kīlauea Iki, Devastation, Kīlauea Visitor Center, and the overall corridor.



Uēkahuna panoramic view

DESIRED CONDITIONS

Desired conditions outline the vision for resource conditions, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services that an agency strives to achieve and maintain in a particular area. Desired conditions help park managers answer the question, “What are we trying to achieve?” Desired conditions also articulate what kinds of experiences and opportunities should be provided for specific areas of the park, as described below. The park’s general management plan outlines desired conditions that will guide this planning effort and be further developed to set a vision for the park’s future. Below are key desired conditions that are most relevant to this planning effort at the Kīlauea summit area. The full list of desired conditions can be found in the general management plan (page 55) on the park’s Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=307&projectID=24888&documentID=64395>.

Natural Resources

- Ecosystems and habitats damaged by nonnative species or human activities are restored. Future development avoids sensitive habitats and dynamic areas prone to natural disturbances.
- The most intensive management of native plant and animal habitat is focused in park special ecological areas.
- Federally listed and state listed threatened and endangered and rare species and their habitats are protected and sustained.
- Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park’s geologic resources are preserved and protected as integral components of the park’s natural systems.
- Natural darkness and other components of the natural lightscape in the park are protected.
- Noise from management or recreational uses is minimized to provide a high-quality visitor experience and protect biological resources and processes that rely on sound (for example intraspecies communication, courtship, predation and predator avoidance, and effective use of habitat).
- Park staff considers and analyzes potential climate change impacts when undertaking long-range planning exercises, setting priorities for scientific research and investigations, and/or when making major decisions affecting natural and cultural resources.
- Continue to minimize the park’s contributions to climate change by implementing strategies to improve sustainability and energy efficiency and decrease the park’s carbon footprint and consumption of resources.

Cultural Resources

- Some archeological sites that can be adequately protected may be interpreted to the visitor.
- To the extent feasible, archeological resources degrading from environmental conditions and visitor impacts are mitigated through data recovery or other preservation strategies, including site-hardening.
- Identified and evaluated historic structures are monitored, inspected and managed to enable the long-term preservation of a resource’s historic features, qualities and materials.
- The National Park Service accommodates access to and ceremonial use of Hawaiian sacred sites by Hawaiian religious practitioners and avoids adversely affecting the physical integrity of these sacred sites.

- The management of cultural landscapes focuses on preserving the landscape's physical attributes, biotic systems, and uses when that use contributes to its historical significance.
- Actions identified in cultural landscape reports are implemented, and a record of treatment is added to the reports.



Nāhuku rainforest



The sacred Kilauea summit evokes deep connection

Visitor Use and Experience

- Park resources are conserved unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Visitors have opportunities for forms of enjoyment that are uniquely suited and appropriate to the superlative natural and cultural resources found in the park. No activities occur that would cause derogation of the values and purposes for which the park has been established.
- To the extent feasible, programs, services, and facilities in the park are accessible to and usable by all people, including those with disabilities.
- For all zones or districts in the park, the types and levels of visitor use are consistent with the desired resource and visitor experience conditions prescribed for those areas.
- The level and type of commercial guided activities would be managed to protect park resources and the visitor experience.
- Consistent with mandates and nonimpairment, the NPS staff reduces or removes known hazards or applies appropriate mitigating measures, such as closures, guarding, gating, education, and other actions.
- Multimodal transportation facilities in the park provide access for the protection, use, and enjoyment of park resources. They preserve the integrity of the surroundings, respect ecological processes, protect natural, cultural, and scenic resources, and provide the highest visual quality and a rewarding visitor experience.
- Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park is managed as part of a greater ecological, social, economic, and cultural system.
- Because the park is an integral part of a larger regional environment, the National Park Service works cooperatively with others to anticipate, avoid, and resolve potential conflicts, protect national park resources, and address mutual interests in the quality of life for community residents. Regional cooperation involves federal, state, and local agencies, Native Hawaiians, neighboring landowners, and all other concerned parties.

ISSUES THE PLAN WILL ADDRESS

The Kilauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan is being developed to address roadway congestion, parking lot congestion, and visitor circulation and access and to ensure protection of sensitive resources within the Kilauea summit area. Although each issue category has its unique challenges, all issues within the planning area relate to each other and are interconnected.

Roadway Congestion

Prior to the recent eruptions, vehicles traveled around the Kilauea summit in a circular flow along Crater Rim Drive. However, since 2008, Crater Rim Drive has become a U-shaped corridor, drastically altering and restricting vehicle circulation between prominent sites. Additional issues occur at Nāhuku, with vehicles backing into oncoming traffic from the parking spaces while other vehicles are trying to U-turn in the

road, increasing vehicle conflicts and safety concerns. While the park has tried barriers and parking lot reconfigurations to reduce vehicle conflict at Nāhuku, there has been limited success.

The park experiences daily traffic and visitor congestion that often increases dramatically and extends into the evening during volcanic activity. During Kīlauea summit eruptions, congestion at Devastation (for access to the Keanakākoʻi area) and Uēkahuna can be a major concern. This congestion causes concentrated use at specific locations in the park, putting strain on park staff and sensitive resources, including wildlife, and creating health and safety concerns. In addition, vehicle queues at the entrance station can result in traffic congestion and hazards along the state highway, impacting residents and communities as well as the safety of visitors and residents.

Parking Lot Congestion

Visitor demand for parking often exceeds supply within the project area. In many instances, parking lots fill as early as 9 a.m. and visitors are forced to park in other areas and walk to their desired destination, for example, parking at Kīlauea Iki and walking 0.4 miles to Nāhuku or parking at the visitor center to access nearby trails and facilities. When all parking lots are full, visitors are not able to experience the locations they want to, leading to a degraded visitor experience.

To access the Nāhuku area, visitors park along Crater Rim Drive in a small roadside parking area. Visitors parking on the west side of the road must cross the road to get to the restrooms and entrance to Nāhuku. This crossing is located on a curved section of Crater Rim Drive, which causes sightline and safety issues due to increased potential for vehicle-pedestrian conflict originating in the parking lot.

Visitor Circulation and Access

Many connecting routes exist for visitors to walk to different locations within the Kīlauea summit area. However, these are often overlooked by visitors due to the forested nature of the landscape, which can obstruct the view of wayfinding signage and lead visitors to walk on the road instead, degrading the visitor experience and creating safety issues. Although some connecting routes are paved, some have high slopes and obstacles that prevent visitors with disabilities from using them. Also, the park receives visitors from around the world and would like to continue to incorporate universal language into signage.

The Kīlauea Iki parking lot mostly serves the Kīlauea Iki Trail, but it is also used as an overflow parking lot for Nāhuku because a 0.4-mile trail connects the two lots. The trail conditions and route are not well-advertised to the public, so some visitors end up walking on Crater Rim Drive down to Nāhuku or up to Kīlauea Iki, causing pedestrian safety concerns.

Natural Resources

The park established special ecological areas to protect the ecosystem from highly disruptive invasive species and to serve as areas where visitors can experience protected habitats. Visitors who hike or drive along the summit corridor will pass through several of these areas (such as Nāhuku), where they encounter a number of federally listed and rare species, such as the nēnē (Hawaiian goose), *Silene hawaiiensis* (Hawaiian catchfly), rainforest lobeliads (plants), and honeycreepers (birds) that exemplify



Traffic congestion at Nāhuku



Visitors cross the road during eruption traffic



Nēnē pair

adaptive radiation unique to Hawai‘i. There is little information for visitors regarding special ecological areas, and most visitors are unaware they are passing through one. Minimizing disturbance to sensitive ecosystems is critical, as is protecting keystone species threatened by disease (e.g., rapid ‘ōhi‘a death). Alterations in seasonal and annual rainfall patterns and temperatures from climate change could increase the vulnerability of species and habitats throughout the park. Additionally, volcanic eruptions can dramatically change landscapes and cause short-term climate changes and natural climate variability.

Cultural Resources

The entire park is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a traditional cultural property. Native Hawaiian traditional uses in the park perpetuate traditional practices and knowledge and the cultural importance of this area. These practices, including chants and dances, depend upon natural sounds, unobstructed views of mountain summits, and an environment that has not been greatly altered by human activity. The entire park landscape and all of its inhabitants and features, including the sky as a layered extension of the landscape, are sacred to Native Hawaiians. The park is a place of birth and the physical representation of many spirits and forces; the active volcanism, the features of the terrain, and the plants and animals that live there are all important to the Native Hawaiian sense of identity, unity, and continuity. Finding a balance between appropriate visitor use and protecting the park’s sensitive resources is critical to perpetuating traditional Hawaiian culture.



Visitors hiking the historic Halema‘uma‘u Trail

PROJECT GOALS

The National Park Service is considering ideas and concepts for improvements in the Kīlauea summit area of Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park. The planning process involves gathering public input to shape potential solutions. The plan is needed to achieve the following goals:

- Identify visitor capacities for the Kīlauea summit corridor based on confirmed or updated desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds outlined in the 2016 *Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park General Management Plan*.
- Establish guidance and identify management strategies to improve visitor travel information, circulation, and safety, and reduce conflicts among passenger cars, oversized vehicles (e.g., buses), motorcycles, bicyclists, and pedestrians on park roads.
- Comprehensively evaluate a list of improvements that are consistent with the park’s overall management goals. These improvements may effect one or more of the following:
 - » Address parking and roadway constraints and associated impacts on resources, safety, and visitor experience, aligning with the 2018 disaster recovery efforts and public response that was incorporated into the 2022 *Hawai‘i Volcanoes Disaster Recovery Project Finding of No Significant Impact*.

- » Identify potential improvements or modifications to multimodal transportation facilities (such as roads, parking areas, bikeways, and pedestrian trails) along the corridor to increase safety, improve accessibility-related compliance through universal design principles and incorporating recommendations from the HAVO Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, accommodate emerging technologies (e.g., electric vehicles), and enhance resource stewardship, sustainability, and NPS operational efficiency while maintaining the integrity of the historical character of the area(s).
- » Explore alternative visitor use management options to better pace the timing and flow of visitation.
- Incorporate considerations for resiliency to help ensure that the desired conditions and management vision consider the dynamic environment of the project area and that facility planning and other visitor/resource management strategies and responses are adapted to current and anticipated future conditions (e.g., impacts of future volcanic eruptions and/or climate change effects on the landscape).



Visitors near Kilauea Overlook during an eruption

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

The National Park Service seeks feedback from the public to prepare us for the Kilauea Summit Area and Corridor Management Plan for Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Your comments will be recorded in the NPS public comment website and then analyzed by an interdisciplinary team made up of NPS employees, including park staff. Comments will inform discussion and potential updates to the park's desired conditions, key issues and opportunities, and management strategies. If you would like a hard copy of the newsletter, please contact havo_planning@nps.gov.

During this comment period, it would be most helpful to respond to as many of the following questions as you can:

- What experiences within the Kilauea area do you find most important?
- Please provide input on the issues described in the newsletter. What other challenges do you recommend the planning team consider within the project area (see map) that most interfere with your ability to access key destinations and get the most out of your desired park experience?
- What is the park doing well to manage these issues that you would like to see continue?
- What strategies do you recommend the planning team consider to address barriers to access, improve the visitor experience, and protect natural and cultural resources?
- What other thoughts would you like to share with the project team?

HOW TO COMMENT

Online (preferred method): <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/kilaueasummitcmp>

Email: havo_planning@nps.gov

Mail: Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park

Attn: Kilauea Corridor Management Plan

P.O. Box 52

Hawaii National Park, HI 96718

The public comment period starts on February 22, 2024, and ends on March 22, 2024. Please be as specific as possible in your suggestions.

NOTE: Comments will not be accepted by fax or any method other than those specified above. Please also note that your entire comment—including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations will not be accepted.

There will be multiple opportunities to engage with us and provide feedback during the planning process. This is the first such opportunity.

QUICK RESPONSE CODES

This QR code will direct you to the project's NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment website to comment on this plan, <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/kilaueasummitcmp>.



This QR code will direct you to Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park's web page to learn more about the park, <https://www.nps.gov/havo/index.htm>.



View from the Kilauea Iki Overlook

